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ABSTRACT

If one assumes that the purpose of education is to change student behavior as a result of some definite course of instruction, then an objective of educational research should be to determine what procedures or techniques best produce the desired behavioral changes. If a course has been effective, then there could be a large number of components in that course contributing to its effectiveness. This paper defines the instructional setting as consisting of nine components that instructors, instructional designers and instructional evaluators would generally agree upon. The nine components are (1) an instructional plan, (2) instructional materials, (3) instructional methods, (4) instructional examinations, (5) instructional evaluations, (6) the students, (7) the instructor, (8) instructor-student interaction, and (9) the instructional arena. Three sources (instructor, departmental peer review committee, and student) were identified as being necessary to provide evaluative information on each of the nine components. This paper presents examples of appropriate evaluative statements for students to use so as not to confuse their input with that of the instructor and departmental peer review committee. (Author/PN)

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COMPONENTS OF TEACHING AS MEASURED BY STUDENT RATINGS

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If one assumes that the purpose of education is to change student behavior as a result of some definite course of instruction, then an objective of educational research should be to determine what procedures or techniques best produce the desired behavioral changes. If a course has been effective, then there could be a large number of components in that course contributing to its effectiveness.

Although there appears to be some controversy among instructors and instructional evaluators concerning what the actual components of the instructional setting are, my experience indicates that such a controversy need not exist. If one defines the basic components of the instructional setting as consisting of (a) an instructional plan, (b) instructional materials, (c) instructional methods, (d) instructional examinations, (e) instructional evaluations, (f) the students, (g) the instructor, (h) instructor-student interaction, and (i) the instructional arena, then there would be little, if any, disagreement between instructors, instructional designers and instructional evaluators.

Some disagreement may surface when each of these components is delineated into a more specific subset of components and when specific measures are produced for each member of the subset. The development of these specific measures, if carefully done, will usually represent a comprehensive assessment of the components of the instructional setting. The major mistake made at this point by those designing an instructional evaluation system is to rely only on student input for the specific measures delineated above. By doing this these evaluators are indicating that students are the only acceptable

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source of information on the basic components of the instructional setting. This predictably results in a very negative reaction on the part of faculty who are to be evaluated, since they feel that relying on one source of information poses a potentially unfair and invalid assessment of their instructional effectiveness. In order to alleviate this problem it is incumbent upon instructional evaluators to develop multiple sources of evaluative information on the basic components of the instructional setting.

The first step would be to define what sources of evaluative information could be used for each of the nine basic components enumerated above. The instructional plan component can be evaluated by the instructor and a departmental peer (colleague) review committee using well developed criteria and guidelines. Students would be able to evaluate only those parts of the instructional plan that instructors formally made them aware of, such as the objectives of the course and the instructor's expectations regarding their performance. Such statements as:

"The objectives of the course were well explained",

"What was expected of me in this course was NOT always clear", and

"The instructor's expectations were NOT clearly defined"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of certain aspects of the instructor's instructional plan.

The instructional materials component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of his/her rationale for selecting and using such materials and whether such materials can effectively be used to stimulate student learning. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of appropriateness, up-to-datedness, relevancy, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of worthwhileness, difficulty, interest value, etc. Such statements as

"The course material seemed worthwhile",

"The course material was too difficult", and

"The course material was interesting"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructional materials component.

The instructional methods component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of his/her rationale for selecting and using such methods and perceived effectiveness of such methods. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of appropriateness, innovativeness, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of learning value, motivational value, comparative effectiveness, etc. Such statements as

"I would have preferred another method of teaching in this course",

"I learn more when other teaching methods are used",

"A good mixture of lecture and discussion was present during class", and

"The course stimulated me to read further in this area"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructional methods component.

The instructional examinations component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of number, difficulty level, accuracy, learning value, etc. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of difficulty level, accuracy, adequacy, learning value, representativeness, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of difficulty level, representativeness, length, etc. Such statements as

"Examinations were too difficult",

"Examinations were mainly comprised of material presented in class", and

"Enough time was provided to complete the examinations"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructional examinations component.

The instructional evaluations component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of his/her rationale for the particular evaluation scheme, how standards were determined, what alternatives are available to the students, etc. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of appropriateness, fairness, objectivity, accuracy in relation to the measurement data, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of fairness, objectivity, relation to what was learned, etc. Such statements as

"The procedure for grading was fair",

"The method of assigning grades seemed very arbitrary", and

"I do not feel that my grades reflected how much I have learned"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructional evaluations component.

The student component of the instructional setting is most approoriately evaluated by both the instructor and the students. The instructor and the students would evaluate the students from the point of view of their interest, attention, motivation, participation, level of learning, etc. Such statements as

"I deepened my interest in the subject matter of this course",

"I participated more in class discussions in this course than in

similar courses", and

"I learned more in this course than in similar courses"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the student component.

The instructor component of the instructional setting is also most appropriately evaluated by both the instructor and students. The instructor would evaluate from the point of view of his/her performance, rapport with the students, humor in the classroom, flexibility, receptivity, etc. The students would evaluate the instructor on the basis of his/her performance, humor, flexibility, interest, demonstrated knowledge, etc. Such statements as

"The instructor was very entertaining",

"The instructor displayed a 'know-it-all' attitude", and

"The instructor demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the subject matter"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructor component.

The instructor-student interaction component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of his/her design, implementation and effectiveness of such an interaction. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of design, appropriate implementation, perceived effectiveness, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of question receptivity, classroom discussion, freedom to disagree, etc. Such statements as

"The instructor encouraged the students to ask questions",

"I participated actively in class discussions", and

"Students in this course felt free to disagree"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructor-student

interaction component.

Finally, the instructional arena component can be evaluated by the instructor, a departmental peer review committee and the students. The instructor would evaluate this from the point of view of adequacy of size, seating, blackboard space, etc. The departmental peer review committee would evaluate this from the point of view of appropriateness of size, seating, blackboard space, etc. The students would evaluate this from the point of view of appropriateness of size, seating, blackboard space, etc. Such statements as

"The classroom created a cramped atmosphere",

"The seats were very uncomfortable", and

"The location of the blackboard made it easy to take notes"

would represent appropriate student evaluations of the instructional arena component.

In summary, if one defines the instructional setting as consisting of the nine components described above then multiple sources of evaluative information would be necessary to assess instructional effectiveness. Although only three sources (instructor, departmental peer review committee and student) were identified, others could be included. The description of the criteria each source would use in evaluating instructional effectiveness for each component of the instructional setting were basically quite similar, however, the precise methods, guidelines and perspective of each source would not necessarily be similar. For this reason it is imperative that when one solicits student input that the statements be appropriate to what the students are in a position to evaluate. This paper presented examples of appropriate

evaluative statements to present to students so as not to confuse their input with that of the instructor and departmental peer review committee.

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